

Remote work in technical services:

What have we learned?



<https://go.uncg.edu/cc2021>

The Charleston Conference. November 3, 2021.

HELLO!

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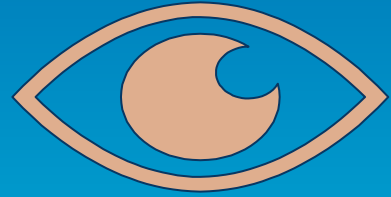


**How was remote work
implemented in library technical
services before the pandemic?**

**And what has changed about
remote work in technical services
since the pandemic started?**

**In early 2020, what did you find if
you searched for articles on
*remote work in library technical
services?***

**In short,
Not a lot**





Context

- ▶ I write a regular column for *Serials Review*, called “Electronic Resources Forum”
- ▶ I’m not an e-resources librarian, so I usually take a broad interpretation of e-resources, sometimes opening up the focus to include technical services
- ▶ In March of 2020, my university shifted to remote learning and remote work
- ▶ Since I was thinking so much about the pandemic and remote work, I decided to look into connecting those topics in my column

Remote Work in Library Technical Services: Connecting Historical Perspectives to Realities of the Developing COVID-19 Pandemic


Anna R. Craft  (Contributor) 

Pages 227-231 | Published online: 20 Aug 2020

 Download citation  <https://doi.org/10.1080/00987913.2020.1806658>



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<https://go.uncg.edu/sr2020>



Articles

About 1,480,000 results (0.10 sec)

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Since 2020

Since 2017

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Sort by relevance

Sort by date

☐ include patents

☒ include citations

Create alert

Remote Work in Library Technical Services: Connecting Historical Perspectives to Realities of the Developing COVID-19 Pandemic

AR Craft - Serials Review, 2020 - Taylor & Francis

The concept and practice of **remote work** in **library technical services** is not new, but the scale and speed of the transition to **remote work** for many libraries due to the COVID-19 pandemic is unprecedented. This column provides an overview of pre-pandemic literature ...

☆ Cited by 4 Related articles All 2 versions

[PDF] Remote library users—needs and expectations

R Cooper, PR Dempsey, V Menon, C Millson-Martula - 1998 - ideals.illinois.edu

... Likewise, their technology backgrounds may be more limited, and they may have less access to **technical** computer support (Rosenquist-Buhler, 1996) with the bulk of their experience gained in the **work** setting ... Page 4. COOPER ET AL./REMOTE LIBRARY USERS 45 ...

☆ Cited by 142 Related articles All 10 versions

Remote locations for technical services: An exploratory survey

MJ McGurr - Technical Services Quarterly, 2011 - Taylor & Francis

... Falling in and out of Love: The Impact of Moving to a **Remote** Location on ... Isacco, "Work Spaces, Satisfaction, and Productivity in Libraries": 27-30 ... Harvard College **Library Technical Services** Resource Web Site <http://hcl.harvard.edu/technicalservices/> (accessed March 22, 2010 ...

☆ Cited by 2 Related articles

[PDF] Service perspectives for the digital library remote reference services

B Sloan - 1998 - ideals.illinois.edu

remote work technical services library

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1. **Remote Work in Library Technical Services:**
Connecting Historical Perspectives to Realities of the
Developing COVID-19 Pandemic.



Academic
Journal

By: Craft, Anna R.. Serials Review, Jul-Sep2020, Vol. 46 Issue 3, p227-231, 5p; DOI:
10.1080/00987913.2020.1806658, Database: Library Literature & Information Science Full
Text (H.W. Wilson)

Subjects: Library technical services; Academic libraries; COVID-19 pandemic

Did you mean...?

Related searches

library technical services **communication and collaboration**

remote **locations** technical services

technical services **managers** library **association**

remote work **instruction librarians**

change in technical services

remote **students** library services

remote library **users**

library **instruction for** remote **learners**

library **resources and** services

service **perspectives digital** library

library technical services **york university**

library technical services **abu dhabi**

remote work **theoretical and applied approaches**

relocation or dislocation technical services

exploratory survey technical services

distant students library services



1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Next

Many of the top results were about:

- ▶ Remote work in non-library settings
- ▶ Library services for remote users / distance learners
- ▶ Remote access to electronic library collections
- ▶ Remote locations for technical services
- ▶ Remote reference services
- ▶ Libraries in remote locations
- ▶ Library services for remote communities



At that time, very few articles addressed both remote work *and* library technical services

But luckily there were at least a few publications on this topic



So, what did I find?



What types of literature informed this column?

Case studies

Documenting
TS remote
work involving
one person or
one dept

+

Reports

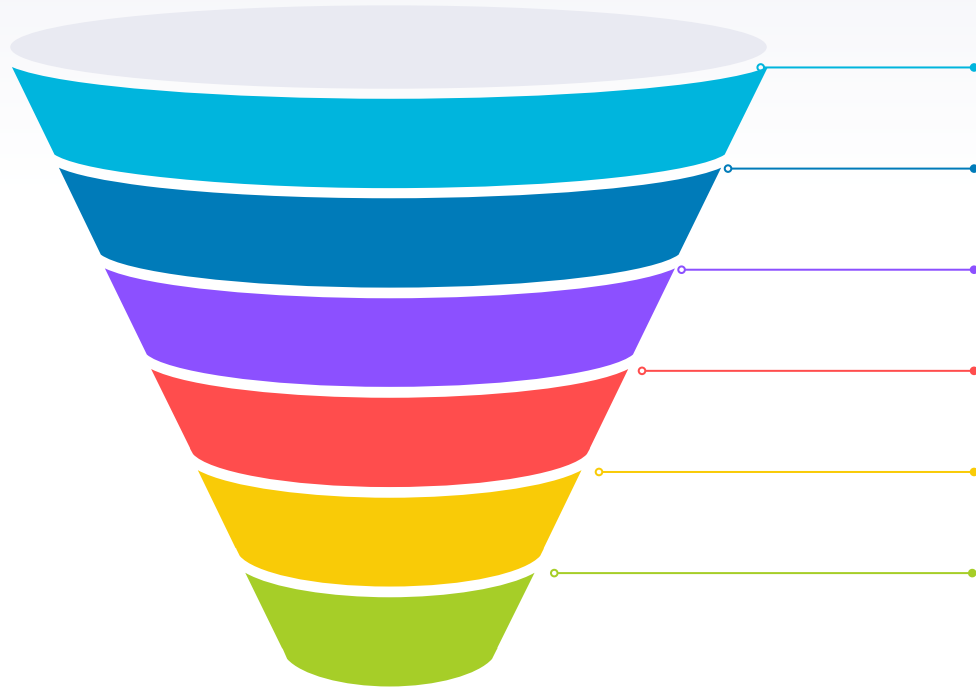
From
conference
discussions
about TS
remote work

+

"Other"

Generalist (not solely
TS) literature about
remote work(ers) in
libraries


► The literature only reflects what is *published*, which doesn't include all experiences



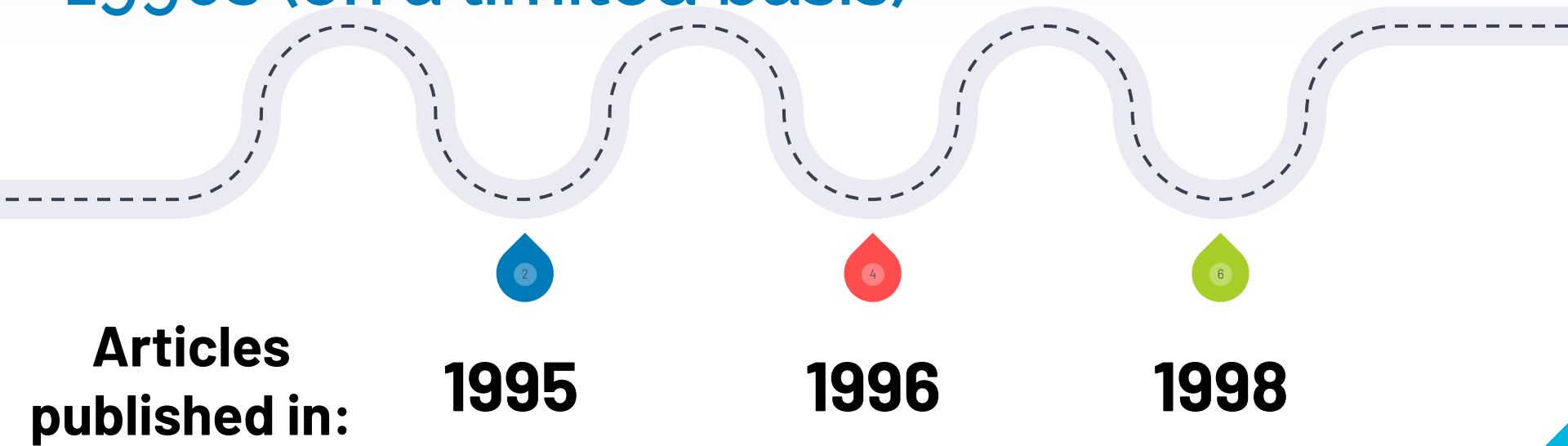
Not all library personnel write, present, and/or publish about their work experiences; so the literature only tells part of the story.



Other literature limitations

- ▶ Full-text online access wasn't available for some articles that sounded promising, and print collections weren't available due to closures
 - ▶ The literature I did find was focused on academic libraries
 - ▶ Also, I may have missed some things!
- 

According to the literature, remote work in library technical services was being discussed, tested, and implemented in the 1990s (on a limited basis)



The literature reflects one particular area within technical services as testing out (and publishing about) these early implementations of remote work.

Cataloging!



Terminology changes over time

What terms and strings appeared in the titles of relevant literature?

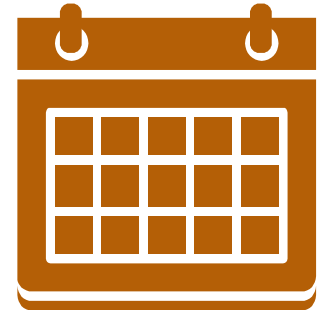
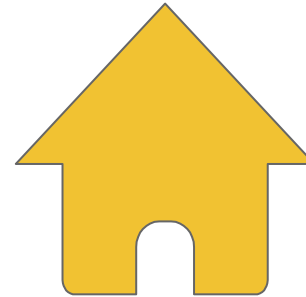
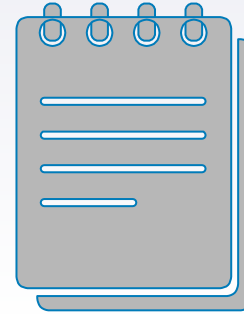
- ▶ “Telecataloging”
- ▶ “Telecommuting”
- ▶ “Cataloging coast to coast”
- ▶ “Flexibility in the management of cataloging”
- ▶ “Flexible staffing”
- ▶ “Working from afar”

What else can we learn from the literature?



Planning for remote work

- ▶ Institutional / departmental policies
 - ▶ Liability considerations
- ▶ Technology
 - ▶ What is needed, what will be provided, and by whom?
- ▶ Agreement on tasks, schedule, time frame, performance evaluation, etc
 - ▶ Some institutions require an MOU or MOA



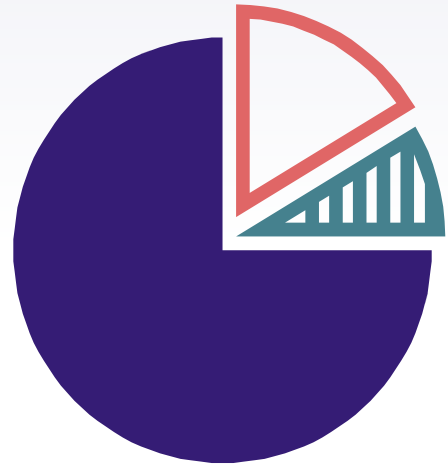
Remote work challenges

- ▶ Technology
- ▶ Isolation
- ▶ Socialization
- ▶ Work-life balance
- ▶ Equity



Remote work can be an equity issue

- ▶ In institutional settings, organizations usually provide physical facilities, technology, internet access, and other job-related needs
- ▶ Not all organizations provide hardware, software, and/or internet access (or financial support for such) to personnel working remotely
- ▶ In such situations, remote work may essentially be reserved for personnel who can provide these resources themselves



Potential remote work benefits

- ▶ Offer flexibility for employees
- ▶ Improve employee morale
- ▶ Increase efficiency
- ▶ Reduce sick leave used
- ▶ Improve employee retention
- ▶ Opportunity for employers to rethink physical spaces (and attain savings on such)



What about the future?

- ▶ We're not where we were this time last year, but we're not out of the pandemic and we don't know its full and lasting effects on libraries and our work, spaces, services, and users
- ▶ **I don't have answers; I do have questions**



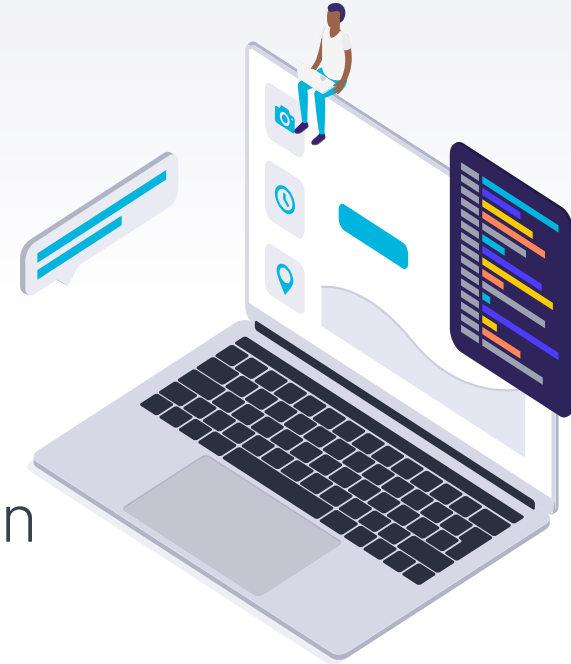
Some questions

- ▶ How did library technical services units handle the transition to remote work?
- ▶ What challenges did they face?
- ▶ What innovations were made, resources were created, or lessons were learned in supporting and managing the transition to remote work?



More questions

- ▶ How have libraries handled provision of technology, isolation of personnel, and other issues discussed in the literature?
- ▶ How will the pandemic affect library TS operations in the long-term?
- ▶ Will remote work become more common in TS units, even after remote work and social distancing measures are no longer required or recommended?

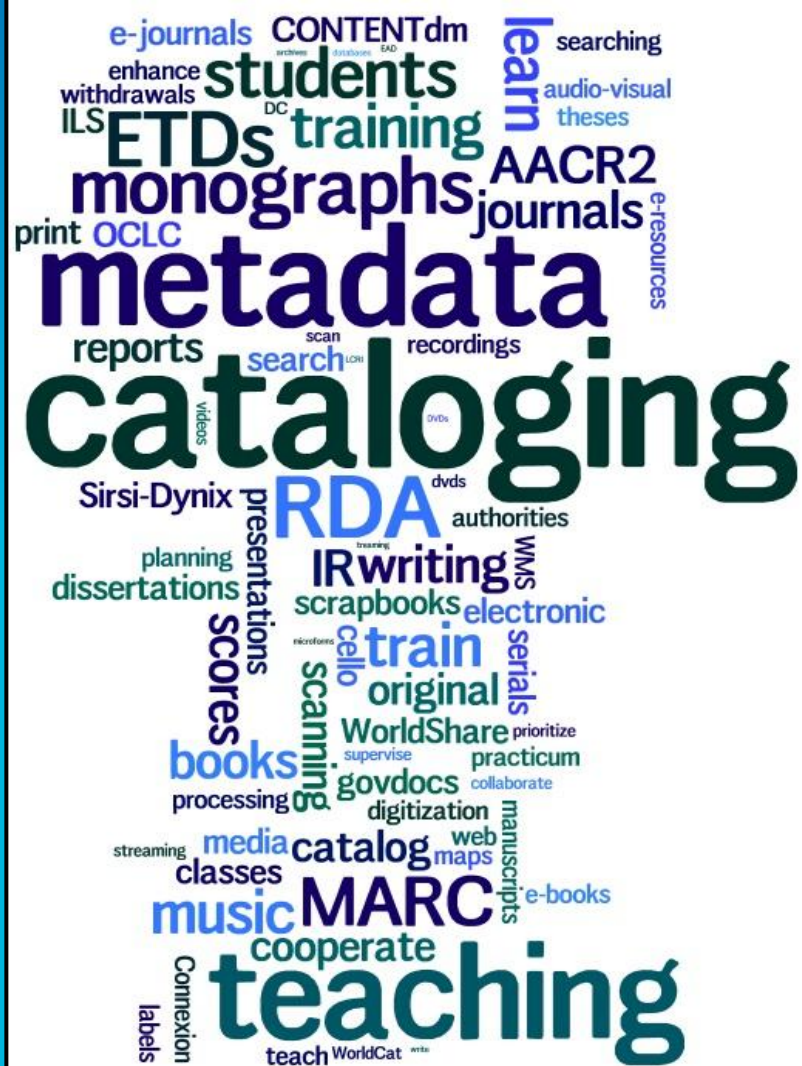


It is hard to imagine
remote work in a
pre-internet time

But it is *not* hard to imagine
tech services personnel
testing out new and different
ways to get their work done



**Personnel in library
technical services
handle change all
the time!**



THANKS!

Any questions?

- ▶ Anna Craft: arcraft@uncg.edu
- ▶ Slides link: <https://go.uncg.edu/cc2021>



► Article links:

Craft, A.R. (2020). Remote work in library technical services: Connecting historical perspectives to realities of the developing COVID-19 pandemic. *Serials Review*, 46(3), 227-231.
DOI: [10.1080/00987913.2020.1806658](https://doi.org/10.1080/00987913.2020.1806658)

The full article is also available via open access in UNCG's institutional repository: <https://go.uncg.edu/sr2020>

More resources:

- ▶ Bénaud, C. L., Steinhagen, E. N., & Moynahan, S. A. (2000). Flexibility in the management of cataloging. *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly*, 30(2-3), 281-298. https://doi.org/10.1300/J104v30n02_08
- ▶ Black, L., & Hyslop, C. (1995). Telecommuting for original cataloging at the Michigan State University Libraries. *College & Research Libraries*, 56(4), 319-323. https://doi.org/10.5860/crl_56_04_319
- ▶ Craft, A. R. (2019). Online documentation portals in library technical services: Shedding light on local practices and procedures. *Serials Review*, 45(3).171-175. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00987913.2019.1645531>

More resources, continued:

- ▶ Duncan, J. (2008). Working from afar: A new trend for librarianship. *College & Research Libraries News*, 69(4), 216-219. <https://doi.org/10.5860/crln.69.4.7972>
- ▶ Germano, M. A. (2010). Does workplace inflexibility cost libraries? *Library Worklife*, 7(3).
<https://ala-apa.org/newsletter/2010/03/28/does-workplace-inflexibility-cost-libraries/>
- ▶ Hickey, D., & Tang, N. (2015). Theoretical and applied approaches to remote work for academic reference and instruction librarians. In S. Hines & M Simons (Eds.), *Library staffing for the future (Advances in library administration and organization, Vol. 34, pp. 177-200)*. Emerald Group Publishing Limited.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/S0732-0671201500000034008>

More resources, continued:

- ▶ Jaskowski, S. K, Sobey, L. M., & Sutton, L. J. (2002). Cataloging coast to coast. *Technical Services Quarterly*, 19(2), 43-52.
https://doi.org/10.1300/J124v19n02_04
- ▶ Johnson, J. L. (1998). Flexible staffing through use of telecommuting: A report of the ALCTS Creative Ideas in Technical Services Discussion Group Meeting at the ALA Midwinter Meeting, Washington, DC, February 1997. *Technical Services Quarterly*, 15(3), 82-83.
- ▶ Leysen, J. M., & Pelzer, N. L. (1996). Telecataloging: A consideration of present and future practices. *LIBRES: Library and Information Science Research Electronic Journal*, 6(1-2). https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/libcat_pubs/6/

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